

wondering, more importantly the majority of the American people are wondering, why we went there, and what we are still doing there.

Remember, we were told this was going to be a walk in the park, in and out in a flash. A few thousand troops and a few million dollars, no sweat. Well, now it has been 3 years, and if we are not out by the end of this year, 2006, our troops will have been fighting in Iraq longer than their grandparents fought in World War II.

More than 2,300 Americans dead; tens of thousands wounded; tens of thousands, maybe even hundreds of thousands, of Iraqi civilians killed; over a quarter billion dollars spent, and for what? So we can lose all stature and credibility around the world? So we can give rise to an insurgency that shows no signs of abating? So we can inspire even greater hatred of the United States among violent jihadists in the Muslim world? Or so we can throw gasoline on the fire of sectarian strife in Iraq and further ignite a civil war?

Yesterday's Washington Post reports at least 86 bodies found in Iraq, many of them in a mass grave, many of them having been strangled or tortured. And today the biggest air offensive since the beginning of this mistake.

When is enough enough, Madam Speaker? How many more Presidential speeches? How many more half-baked platitudes about the march of freedom?

Just two days ago at George Washington University, the President said: "The work ahead in Iraq is hard." But it was his administration that assured us 3 years ago of just the opposite, that this was going to be easy. "We will complete the mission," he said yesterday. But in May 2003, he was declaring "mission accomplished," in fact, draping an aircraft carrier with those very words.

The real tragedy is that our Nation will be living with this disastrous fallout from this war for generations. The money we have spent on this war is money we do not have and will not have for investments in our people, their health care, their education, their retirement, their job training, and, yes, their security.

The unspeakable, despicable acts of torture that took place at Abu Ghraib have robbed us of our moral authority. The very foundations of freedom have been threatened by the PATRIOT Act and the President's defiance of the rule of law on domestic surveillance.

The trumped-up weapons of mass destruction intelligence and the fabrication about an Iraqi link to 9/11 have damaged the trust between America and its leaders, trust that is critical to a thriving democracy.

And on a very basic human level, what about men and women who come back from Iraq shattered by the experience? Even if they make it home with all of their limbs functioning and intact, what about the psychological demons that come home with them?

These brave patriots need medical help if they are going to lead a productive civilian life, but according to a recent study by the military, they are not getting it.

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Although one-third of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are seeking mental health services, the great majority of those who are diagnosed with psychiatric problems are going untreated.

A lot of damage has been done, Madam Speaker, and there is a lot of work ahead: work to repair our troops, our principles, and our reputation. But there is one thing we could do right now to stem the tide, to contain the damage, to literally stop the bleeding. We could and we should bring our troops home now.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. VAN HOLLEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BISHOP of Utah addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SAVING LIVES THROUGH LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Madam Speaker, I came here to Washington to do everything I could to reduce gun violence in this country; and unfortunately, the atmosphere that is here is preventing me from doing that.

There are many out there that say I am out there to try to take away the right of someone to own a gun, and yet I have never introduced any kind of legislation that would do any such thing.

What I am trying to do is save lives. What I am trying to do is certainly try

to keep medical costs down. We have come to an agreement, many Members in this Chamber, on legislation I introduced a couple of years ago. The reason behind this legislation was because, unfortunately, there was another shooting in my district and two of my parishioners were killed. And the sad story is it could have been prevented.

Peter Troy, who is someone that had a very long mental health background, and he also had a restraining order from his mother against him because of his violent acts, was able to go into a store and legally buy a gun. He was able to do this because the State, my State of New York, did not put the information into the State system that was supposed to go into the NICS system.

This is happening every single day across this Nation. We looked into it and figured how can we change this. So we started looking at the different States. We saw that some States hardly had any records in the NICS system that had anything to do with domestic violence. We saw also that many States did not put anything in on those that were convicted of felonies. So we came up with legislation that we thought would help to reduce crime in this country.

We came up with legislation that we knew if we could keep guns out of illegal hands, those that should not be able to buy a gun, we could save lives. And if we could save lives, we are hoping also we could save injuries, and this way it is a win-win situation for everyone in our community.

I am hoping before the Memorial Day recess that I will be able to get my legislation back on to the floor for a vote. It did pass in 1997, and we had it on a voice vote because everybody agreed with it.

Now, I know our time down here is very short. We are going on another break this very week. For the 10 years that I have been here in Washington, we have never had a break in March. I wish we could be staying so we could continue to work to do the people's work.

I guess what I want to talk about is that we could have reasonable laws that could help people, save people's lives and make a difference in someone's life. We can do this without certainly infringing on anyone's second amendment rights.

The NICS bill that I am proposing would help our States bring their data up to speed. We all know that computers and the Internet are moving very rapidly, but a computer is only as good as the information in it. What I propose, and what had been accepted here in this House, would give the States the money so that when someone is convicted of a crime that would make them ineligible to be able to buy a gun, that would immediately go into the system. This is a win-win situation for everyone.